(c) the assessment of the gas reserves by him after analysis of the seismic data; and

(d) what is Government's time-bound action plan to estimate the reserves and to commercially tap the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURALGAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes Sir, Dr. Y. Mokogon was shown a few seismic lines of deep water areas of the Arabian sea and Bay of Bengal to elicit his opinion about gas hydrates.

(c) Dr. Mokogon was of the view that Gas hydrates will be in the deep water areas of western and eastern coast of India. However, no quantitative assessment of gas reserves from gas hydrates has been possible with the limited data available.

(d) A preliminary study of Gas hydrates in deep water areas of India is being taken up and the quantum of Gas hydrate reserves can be assessed after the completion of this and subsequent studies. Action is also in hand to acquire the expertise from overseas agencies known to be leaders in the field of Gas hydrate studies.

Schemes to Assist Rural Artisans

1254. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to stale:

(a) whether Government have any schemes to assist poorer sections of artisans like weavers, potters and other people, following trades in rural areas;

(b) if so, the deails of the schemes and the financial assistance provided to such rural craftsmen;

(c) whether Government propose to modify the schemes to suit local requirements; and

(d) whether the DRDA has authority in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes, Sir. This Ministry is implementing the scheme of Supply of Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans like potters, carpenters, cobblers, stone craftsmen, blacksmiths etc. except weavers, tailors, needle workers and 'Bidi' workers.

(b) Under the Scheme, the rural artisans living below the poverty line are to be given improved tools to enable them to enhance the quality/quantity/marketability of their products and reduce their drudgory.

The average cost of a tool kits is Rs. 2000 and the exact unit cost is to be fixed by the DRDA concerned. The artisans are required to contribute 10% of the cost of the tool kits as their contribution with the balance 90% being met as subsidy from the Government of India. The use of power driven toolkits upto the cost of Rs. 4500 has also been permitted under the scheme. Beyond this, it should be linked to loan under IRDP. At the district level the DRDA is the nodal Agency.

Financial assistance provided to rural craftsman since inception of the scheme is as under:-

Year	Financial Assistance provided (Rs. in crores)
1992-93	16.85
1993-94	23.22
1994-95	29.00
1995-96	40.00

(c) At present there is no such proposal to modify the present scheme.

(d) Question does not arise.

Encouraging private builders in Construction of Houses

1255. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the housing problem in urban areas particularly in Delhi, Government propose to encourage private builders in construction of houses;

(b) if so, the present housing policy of Government in this regard; and

(c) lo what extent the problem of housing in urban areas would be solved by assigning the task to private builders?